LEWES NEW SCHOOL

PROJECTS POLICY (MAKING CONNECTIONS)

1. Introduction

This strand of the curriculum describes our **connections to the world** and the **interconnectedness of all things**. It is also the area of the curriculum in which children make **connections in their learning**. It is at the heart of the co-created curriculum and responds to the curiosity and imagination of the child.
Learning takes place through thematic, interdisciplinary projects, which may at times be adopted by the whole school or by a small group of children. Projects are selected and unfold in negotiation with the teacher, who ensures a **broad and balanced** range of subjects are covered.

Project themes are triggered in a range of ways. Ideas sometimes develop from discussions inspired by an event in the local or wider community; an object that a child has brought in to school; or a conversation that has been captured in the course of free play.

Projects are open ended and co-created by the adults and children who work together. Projects are purposeful with research and enquiry taking forms that are as close as possible to those practiced in the wider adult world. Children work in teams of (eg scienctific, historic, geographic) researchers who might at the end of a collaborative project share ideas through a range of media such as a powerpoint presentation; an exhibition; written publication or theatre performance.

Projects provide a vehicle for continual exploration and discovery that can be engaged with both independently and collaboratively.

Through projects children learn to understand that the making of mistakes and the taking of risks is an essential part of what it is to think creatively. Alongside this they understand that successful and sophisticated 'end products' also involve such things as hard work and perseverance.

In the course of any project children are encouraged to pursue individual interests and questions so as to maintain high levels of engagement and appropriate levels of challenge. For example, a team of scientists researching a range of questions relating to the difference between soil and sand will involve each child's understanding and skill being stretched and at the same time the group enjoying the bounty of its collective endeavour.

Children are trusted to make good decisions about their learning. During projects children take responsibility for how their learning is organised. They have considerable choice about where they might work, who they might work with, when they might work and for how long etc.

 Learning takes place within a strong work ethic and children are not generally allowed to give up on a project until it is seen through to a successful end.

Projects are referenced to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and our systems of documenting, reviewing and monitoring the children's learning are designed to ensure that the curriculum is relevant, broad, balanced and rigorous and that children have the best chance of achieving individual success.

## 2. Guiding Principles

3. Our Aims

4. Teaching Projects

Our approach to projects fits within our overall teaching and learning policy and approach, particularly with relation to experiential learning, deep learning and co-creation as described there.

For more information see the *Teaching & Learning Policy*.

4.1 The Project Process

Children are encouraged to reflect on the learning process as well as the knowledge that is being created. Teachers model being effective learners and make their own learning transparent by talking through processes and modeling approaches. They show children that making mistakes is part of the process of learning.
The learning process is taught as a cycle, which children are encouraged to understand and apply.
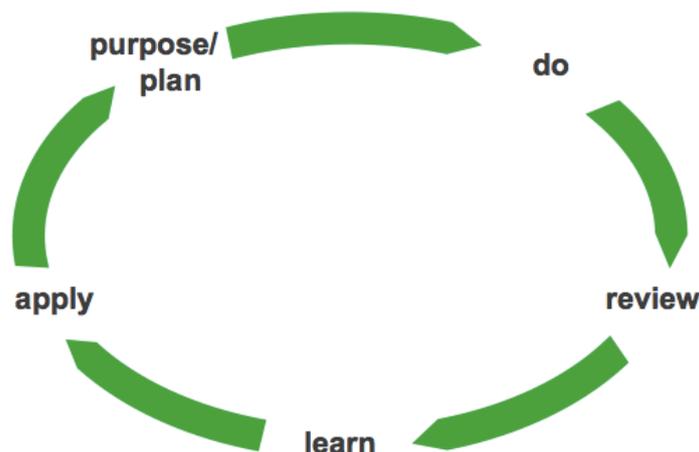
Purpose/Plan and **Do** involve active engagement and the use of materials, resources, ideas or other people.
Review and **Learn** involve active sense-making, standing back from the experience, reflecting to create knowledge and extracting meaning and consequences.
Apply involves transferring and using the learning in different contexts. It involves

connecting new learning to previous learning and creating new learning.

4.2 The Teacher's role

Stimulating ideas

a. Rather than just coming from discussion alone, questions that trigger projects will be most successfully raised in response to a range of **rich and stimulating experiences and resources.** These might include a visit out of school; visitors coming in to school; the gathering of resources (including artefacts, books, film etc) that are brought in to the classroom etc etc.
b. The organising of the above is done with a feeling of **collaboration** within a culture where children experience that their own suggestions and contributions will be as likely to inform projects as those of the teachers.

Gathering initial ideas through observations and listening

a. Observations of independent activity are an important way of **gathering ideas for projects** with younger children.
b. Observations are an important way of providing **key information about a child's learning**. Information gathered will inform where they might be encouraged to go next in order to move on with their learning.
c. With older children **transcriptions of group discussions** are a critical way of gathering questions for investigation and research.

Developing ideas

a. As projects develop children are offered **choice within broad themes.** This allows children to enjoy the benefits of collaboration without feeling stifled by an overly narrow range of activity or research.
b. This will result in individual children producing a **range of outcomes** (eg in a history project around the first war some children might contribute to a book of poetry whilst another might make a film about life in the trenches).
c. Whilst there will be some focused teacher led activity (usually either with small groups or for a short stretch at the beginning or end of a longer session) most of the learning will happen through **independent investigation, research and experimentation** which is shared with the whole group at the beginning and end of classroom sessions.
d. The teacher will help the child (or group) organize her/his thoughts and ideas, develop a timeline, seek out information and resources and plan for presentation.

5. Human and Social Learning

These aspects of learning form part of the 'connections' strand of our curriculum and are explored through the interdisciplinary, co-constructed project work. They may also be discovered through the communication and wellbeing strands. For more information please see our Curriculum Policy.

5.1 Time and Place

Children investigating our heritage, geography and the natural world, and develop understanding in how the present has been shaped by the past.

CASE STUDY: 'The Normans' Project

The subject of the Normans was inspired by the teaching staff to celebrate a key date, and because it was felt that a humanities project would best balance the curriculum at this moment.

The project was kick started with a trip to the beach where William the Conqueror landed. Back in the classroom a flow of questions followed. Various subject areas were devised, and the children each chose an area that inspired them. One group researched Norman weapons, and made them out of wood. In full armour, they re-enacted the battle of Hastings, and filmed it. They edited the video, with sound effects, to present to the community.

Another group became interested in Saxon Village life and made a small-scale replica Saxon village. A clothing group looked at Norman dress, and made costumes including leather shoes and caps. They then put on a Norman fashion show, and even got help with catwalk modeling from a former fashion model.

A geology group were fascinated by the shoreline and how it had changed since 1066. Studying old maps led to the building of small relief models of the coastline displaying how the coast had eroded over time. Another small group sewed their own version of the Bayeux tapestry. The final group designed and made a large replica Norman boat. They also made small model sailing ships, which they then sailed on the nearby river. Finally, all the work was presented to parents and the community in the form of an exhibition.

5.2 Culture and Community

This theme includes exploring and appreciating diversity, citizenship, human values, religion and enterprise.

An approach to education that promotes actively listening to each child's point of view is naturally one that values diversity and inclusivity. Children are encouraged to recognise themselves and others as complex, multi-faceted individuals with their own interests, experiences, backgrounds and aspirations.

Religion and faith, morality and ethics are explored through whole school gatherings where parents and members of local faith communities are encouraged to share their religious and cultural festivals and celebrations.

Children also take part in cyclical events and celebrations within the school and as a means of engaging with the wider community. For example, all Year 6 children take

part in the local Patina Parade, a local rite of passage for children leaving primary school in the area.

Children are encouraged to take an interest in local, national and global issues, and current affairs often provide inspiration for projects.

CASE STUDY: Appreciating the complexity of diversity

Our culture of mutual respect and kindness is the basis for all we do. It is our aim to ensure that all members of the community have the skills to uphold this as a support to avoiding stereotyping and discrimination and empowering children by valuing their identities.

We understand that the staff at the school cannot know everything they need to know in order to support children in all their diversity: working closely with parents is essential for tackling inequalities and helping children to feel they fully belong within the school community with all their identities and belongings intact.

Parents are an important source of information about the child's background – and helping parents feel welcomed, respected and included is a first step to helping their child feel so too. We aim increasingly over the coming years to engage parents in proactively sharing and teaching about their heritage alongside their children, for example through "heritage" assemblies and through parent participation in particular projects such as "countries, cultures and languages".

Our approach does not seek to "single out" minority-identified parents and children, a practice which runs the risk of being – or seeming – tokenistic. Instead, we want to invite all children and families to consider what aspect of their heritage and belonging is of value to them, and encourage them to enrich the school curriculum with their lived experience and contemporary histories. Diversity is not the property of the few, but a rich lived tapestry weaving within and around every one of us.

6. Scientific and Technological Learning

These aspects of learning form part of the 'connections' strand of our curriculum and are explored through the interdisciplinary, co-constructed project work. They may also be discovered through the communication and wellbeing strands. For more information please see our Curriculum Policy.

6.1 Scientific Enquiry

Children discover how the world works through investigation, experimentation, hypothesis, testing and evaluation, skills which are enhanced through our project-based approach to learning.

CASE STUDY: 'Animals Including Humans' Project

A group of children in later years recently undertook a science project, 'Animals including Humans'. A parent who is a doctor brought in a real human skeleton which

inspired children to question how this related to their own bodies. A second parent visited to provide a movement workshop to encourage children to reflect on their own felt-sense of their anatomy. Children were inspired and hungry for deeper knowledge and understanding, so a third parent led the group in dissecting a herring. Children worked in pairs, investigating the anatomy of the fish and completed detailed observational drawings.
The project evolved to investigate food chains and habitats, explored through creative writing, dance and music. The project culminated in an exhibition which included a dance performance and a multi-sensory, interactive walk-through of a range of different habitats that spanned the entire length of the corridor.

6.3 Sustainability

Sustainability means finding ways of living and working that support a high quality of life without compromising the future of generations to come. Children at Lewes New School develop appreciation of relationships and interconnectedness and qualities such as compassion and empathy, which lend themselves naturally towards a desire to protect their environment.

It has been suggested that an open-ended approach to learning is central to sustainability, equipping children with the skills and motivation to find creative solutions to the problems that face us in the 21st Century. "All global problems come back to habits of thinking and none can be solved without addressing *how* we learn."[1]
In a sustainable school, the campus and community are extensions of the classroom.

Every aspect of school and community life - the way decisions are made, the way energy is used, the origins of its food - is an opportunity to learn. Children are challenged to apply what they learn by improving the wellbeing of the school and community.

Sustainability has been named a school improvement target. To this end, we are using the National College for School Leadership '**Valuing our Future'** toolkit to lead us through this process.

The school offers a range of environmental enrichment activities and has an eco award.

10. Monitoring And Assessment

For more information see the ***Assessment Policy***.

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[1] http://www.wiserearth.org/article/8af5975f2019567bc449d19355b359fa